Annual Report

for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 Workers' Advisers Program

NOVA SCOTIA

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Chief Worker Adviser

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May 1, 2013

The Honourable Frank Corbett
Minister of Labour & Advanced Education
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax, NS

Dear Minister Corbett:

In accordance with Section 268 of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, S.N.S. 1994-95 c.10, as am., I have the honour of submitting the Workers' Advisers Program Annual Report for the period April 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013.

Yours truly,

Kenny LeBlanc
Barrister & Solicitor
Chief Worker Adviser

copy: Sandra McKenzie, Deputy Minister
Labour & Advanced Education

copy: Barbara Jones Gordon, Executive Director
Labour Services Branch
Labour & Advanced Education

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Letter from the Chief Worker Adviser

The Workers' Advisers Program had another busy and productive year in 2012/2013. At year-end the Program had 868 active files. During the year the Program had 1042 requests for service, 994 files were opened, and we provided service to 2019 clients.

In 2012/2013 the Program filed 290 appeals with the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT) on behalf of workers. We also filed 182 appeals to Hearings Officers of the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and 7 appeals to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

In the summer of 2012/2013, the Program revised and implemented a new intake process to deal with new requests for legal services from injured workers. The Program's target wait time for a worker to receive contact from a Workers' Adviser is 6 weeks. In 2011/2012, with 1030 requests for service, the average province-wide wait time for service was 7.6 weeks, which exceeded our target. In 2012/2013, under the new intake process, the average province-wide wait time for service was 6.2 weeks. I am pleased with this improvement and I appreciate our staff's hard work in making this happen. My hope is that we will continue to reduce this wait time.

As I reported in previous years, the litigious and adversarial nature of the workers' compensation appeal process continues to be a significant factor impacting on the Program's work. Employers regularly contest and participate in workers' appeals, which has significant implications for the workers' compensation system, including contributing to delays in dealing with appeals. This matter warrants further discussion among stakeholders in the workers' compensation system.

Over the past couple of years, I have been meeting with WCAT's Chief Appeal Commissioner, a project manager retained by the WCB, and others to review and provide recommendations on how to improve the Internal Appeals (Hearing Officers) process at the WCB. This process is continuing and we hope to see the recommendations sometime in 2012/2013. I hope these recommendations will lead to changes to reduce the litigious and adversarial nature of the workers' compensation system.

An ongoing significant factor for the Program's budget is costs associated with obtaining medical information that we request to help in the pursuit of workers' appeals. The need to obtain medical information in more cases is also related to the adversarial nature of the appeal system.

Despite these factors, I am pleased to report that the Program finished the year at 94 percent of our budget authority.

At the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal, we were successful in *Hogan*, which confirmed that Early Retirement Incentive Program benefits payable to former Devco employees cannot be used to reduce any entitlement to receive earnings-replacement benefits from the WCB that these employees may have. ECBC, Devco's successor, has applied to the Supreme Court of Canada for

leave to appeal from the Court's decision. We should know sometime in 2013-2014 if the Supreme Court of Canada will grant ECBC's application for leave to appeal.

Psychological stress in workers' compensation matters continues to be a significant issue. WCAT rendered a panel decision on December 6, 2012 that found the definition of "accident" in the *Workers' Compensation Act*, to the extent it excludes coverage for stress unless it is an acute reaction to a traumatic event, does not violate the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. On behalf of the worker in this case, the Program has applied for leave to appeal to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. The name of this case is *John Dale v. Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, et al.*, C.A. No. 410753. This appeal is currently on hold because we are waiting for a new WCB policy dealing with stress, which we hope will be released by the end of 2013.

On a somewhat related matter, in March 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada granted leave to appeal from an Alberta Court of Appeal's decision in *Martin v. Alberta (Workers' Compensation Board)*, 2012 ABCA 248, dealing with a federal employee's stress claim. In this case the Alberta Court of Appeal determined that the Alberta WCB's policy dealing with stress applied to a federal employee's compensation claim. The Supreme Court of Canada has set a tentative hearing date in December 2013 for this appeal (Case Number 35052). The Program is not involved in this case, but I will be interested to review the Supreme Court of Canada's decision to see if it has implications for Nova Scotia's workers' compensation system.

In January 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada heard an appeal of a workers' compensation case in *Marine Services International Limited, et al. v. Estate of Joseph Ryan, by its Administratrix, Yvonne Ryan, et al.* (Case Number 34429), on appeal from a decision of the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal, 2011 NLCA 42. This case concerns the interaction between the right to sue by dependents of deceased fishers, under the federal *Marine Liability Act*, and the bar against suing employers and others under the provincial workers' compensation statute. Again, while the Program is not involved in this case, I will be interested to review the Supreme Court of Canada's decision.

In applications for leave to appeal and appeals we are continuing to see the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal usually apply a deferential standard when it reviews WCAT decisions. Practicallyspeaking, this standard of review makes it more difficult to successfully appeal WCAT decisions. In this respect, the Court of Appeal has been following a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions, beginning with *Dunsmuir* in 2008, dealing with the judicial review of administrative tribunal decisions.

In September 2012 I attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Workers Advisors and Advocates (CAWAA) in Regina, Saskatchewan. The annual CAWAA meeting and CAWAA telephone conferences throughout the year are great opportunities to network and exchange information with my counterparts from across the country.

I prepared a review paper on workers' compensation matters in preparation for a day-long meeting in October 2012 with the Worker Counselor and representatives from Injured Workers' Associations. Our group met with the Minister in the afternoon to discuss various issues of concern. I thought this meeting, including the meeting with the Minister, was very useful.

In January 2013, I presented a Webinar to CAWAA members and other workers' advisors and advocates around the country, which was based on a paper I prepared beforehand that reviewed recent leading Canadian workers' compensation decisions. This Webinar was very well received.

At other times in 2012/2013, I met and discussed various workers' compensation issues with staff from the Office of the Worker Counselor and representatives from Injured Workers' Associations.

I continued to serve as a member of the Heads of Agencies Committee and the Issues Resolution Working Group as we worked to try to improve services to stakeholders of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System (WSIS). In my role as Chief Worker Adviser, I participated in the WSIS Annual General Meeting in May 2012.

I regularly attended meetings of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education's Senior Management Team and with my fellow directors from the Department's Labour Services Branch.

I also took part in various in-person and online training sessions in 2012/2013. These sessions, respectively, concerned my work as a government employee and as a practicing lawyer in Nova Scotia. It is worth noting that the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society mandated at least 12 hours of continuing legal education per year for lawyers starting in 2012.

We look forward to another busy and successful year in 2013/2014.
Submitted,

Kenny LeBlanc
Chief Worker Adviser

Mandate and History

Injured workers covered under Nova Scotia's *Workers' Compensation Act* are protected through benefits and services available under a no-fault insurance system. Through what is known as the historic trade-off, workers and their families give up the right to sue for the consequences of work-related injuries in return for compensation payable regardless of fault and without the need to pursue a lawsuit in court. The other side of the historic trade-off is that employers must pay assessments to cover the cost of the system in return for immunity from civil liability arising from work-related injuries.

The Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB), is established under Part I of the *Workers' Compensation Act*. The WCB is the policy-leader for the workers' compensation system and investigates and adjudicates workers' claims in the first instance. The WCB also administers the Accident Fund, which is made up of employers' assessments and covers the costs of the workers' compensation system.

Workers or employers may appeal WCB final decisions to the Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT), established under Part II of the *Workers' Compensation Act*. There is a limited right of appeal from WCAT decisions to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

The Workers' Advisers Program was established in February 1996 when Part III, along with most of the rest of the current *Workers' Compensation Act*, was proclaimed into force. The Workers' Advisers Program under Part III replaced the former Workers' Counselors' Program, which administered a certificate system whereby private law firms around the province provided legal representation to workers in connection with their workers' compensation claims.

The Workers' Advisers Program is an independent legal clinic that provides free assistance, advice, and representation to injured workers and their families claiming workers' compensation benefits and who meet the Program's eligibility criteria.

As a general rule, if the Program determines that a worker has a reasonable expectation of success of obtaining at least $500 or its equivalent in an appeal of a claim, that worker will meet the Program's eligibility criteria for service.

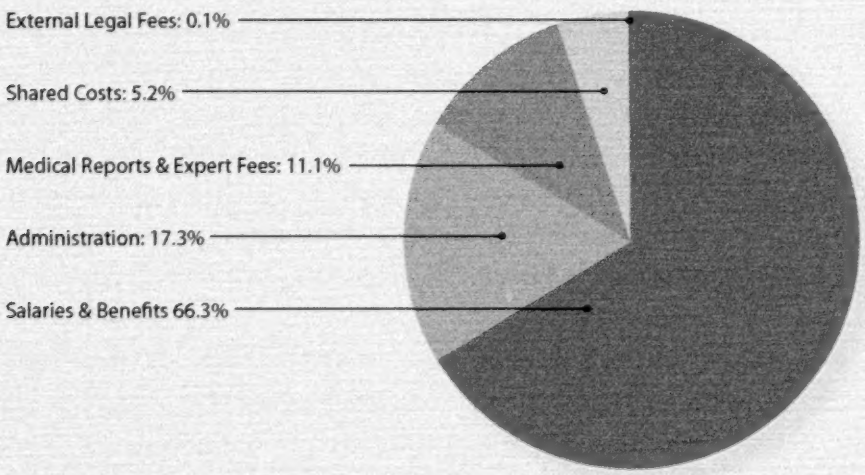
The Program receives the funding for its operations by way of a grant from the Accident Fund.

The Chief Worker Adviser supervises the Program and reports to the Minister of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education. The Program's head office is in Halifax and with a second office in Sydney. The Program has maintained the Halifax and Sydney offices since May 1997, while monitoring the caseload by county to determine whether other offices in other parts of the province should be opened.

Annual Program Expenditures

The total cost associated with the operation of the Program is charged to the Accident Fund administered by the WCB. The final 2012-2013 report provided by the Department of Finance indicates the following expenditures:

	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08
Salaries & Benefits	$1,804,407	$1,904,748	$1,717,753	$1,593,543	$1,643,841	$1,327,695
Administrative	$470,033	$494,228	$534,275	$547,932	$520,494	$553,318
Legal Services - External	$2,886	$6,027	$10,731	$2,067	$1,895	$306
Medical Reports & Expert Fees	$300,534	$291,871	$275,182	$257,401	$138,257	$101,843
(Less Chargeable to other departments	($3,011)	0	($27,210)	($11,162)	($102,310)	($32,568)
TOTAL	**$2,574,849**	**$2,696,876**	**$2,510,731**	**$2,378,619**	**$2,202,177**	**$1,950,594**
% of Authority Spent	93.6%	100.4%	102.0%	97.1%	89.5%	82.1%



Personal
Organizational Chart

The Chief Worker Adviser, the Secretary to the Chief Worker Adviser, the Intake Clerk, nine Workers' Advisers, a secretary/receptionist, and two secretaries work out of the Halifax office.

Two Workers' Advisers, the Program's Supervisor Office Services, a secretary/ receptionist, and a secretary work out of the Sydney office.

Minister of Labour & Advanced Education

Deputy Minister Labour & Advanced Education

Executive Director Labour Services Branch
Labour & Advanced Education

WORKERS' ADVISERS PROGRAM
Chief Worker Adviser
Kenny LeBlanc

Secretary to Chief Worker Adviser
Brenda Potvin (Halifax)

Workers' Advisers
Halifax:
Bill MacDonald
Patricia Dunn
Terry Brown
Bill Powroz
Dorothy McLean
Jane Spurr
Michelle Margolian
Stephen Lawlor
Vanessa Nicholson

Sydney:
Eleanor Neal
Rick MacCuish

Supervisor Office Services
Linda Peckham (Sydney)

Intake Clerk
Margaret Odell (Halifax)

Secretaries
Heather Bélanger (Halifax)
Janice Harnish (Halifax)
Shirley DiPersio (Sydney)

Receptionist/Secretary
Terry Cox (Halifax)
Kelley Flannigan (Sydney)

(Incumbents in place as of March 31, 2013)

Client Services

The Workers' Advisers Program is a public legal clinic established to help eligible injured workers and their families seeking compensation under the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

The Program provides free legal services independent of the Workers' Compensation Board and the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Clients of the Program are in a solicitor-client relationship with the Program and its staff, in the same way as they would be with any other lawyer or law firm in Nova Scotia.

The service provided to workers by the Workers' Advisers Program can include representation through all phases of appeal in the workers' compensation system. It can begin with the first denial at the WCB and end when an appeal is completed or the worker is no longer eligible for service.

Anyone who wants to be a client of the Program must go through our "intake process".

Intake

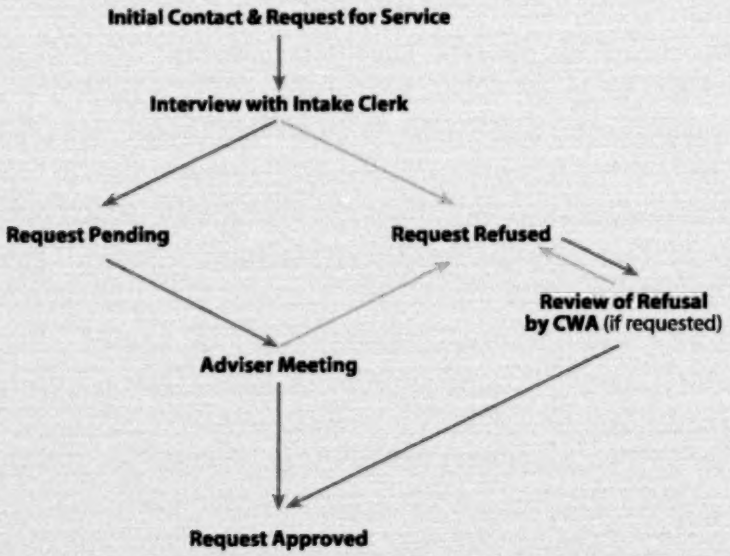
The Program's intake process begins with a determination of whether the worker's request for service results from a written WCB decision. If the worker does not have a written decision, the Intake Clerk will usually refuse service.

If the worker has a written WCB decision, the Intake Clerk will obtain the necessary information from the worker and open a file, which will be assigned to a Workers' Adviser. Workers' Advisers are lawyers and non-lawyers with the necessary training and experience to provide legal services to injured workers and their families relating to workers' compensation matters.

A Workers' Adviser will review the file and contact the worker to advise whether the Program will provide legal services.

A worker refused service from the Program may request that the Chief Worker Adviser give further consideration to the request for legal services. The Chief Worker Adviser's determination in this regard is the final determination on whether the Program will provide services in the case.

A worker requesting service from the Program for the first time as a result of a WCAT decision bypasses the usual intake process and is referred directly to the Chief Worker Adviser for review and consideration. This process is followed in relation to WCAT decisions because a worker only has 30 days under the *Workers' Compensation Act* to file a possible appeal to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal from a WCAT decision.



In general, in order to qualify for services, an injured worker must have a reasonable expectation in success in obtaining at least $500 or the equivalent in an appeal from a written decision.

Part III of the *Workers' Compensation Act* states that it does not give any person a right to legal advice or representation under the Workers' Advisers Program.

If the worker is denied legal services by the Program, the worker may continue to pursue the appeal on his or her own and the worker may retain legal representation at his or her own expense. The Program's denial of services has no impact on the status of a worker's appeal.

The Workers' Advisers Program does not represent injured workers as a special interest group or lobby government for changes in legislation. The Program does not pursue other matters outside of workers' compensation claims, such as Canada Pension benefits, Unemployment Insurance, or Social Assistance.

Workers' Advisers do not represent employers and they do not advise or represent governments or other agencies.

Operations

Case Summary Statistics

Active # files at year beginning April 1, 2012 = 1025
Active # files at year ending March 31, 2013 = 868

2012-13	Requests for Service	Files Opened	Files Closed	# Clients Served 2012-13
Apr/May/Jun	289	288	297	1313
Jul/Aug/Sep	257	257	361	1570
Oct/Nov/Dec	243	243	249	1813
Jan/Feb/Mar	253	206	267	2019
TOTAL FOR YEAR	**1042**	**994**	**1174**	**2019**

"Requests for Service" represents the number of calls received by the Intake Clerk for processing during each of the reporting periods. During 2012-2013 we received an average of 87 requests for service per month.

There were 397 refusals of service during 2012-13.

The "# Clients Served 2012-13" represents the number of active files on April 1, 2012, combined with the total number of files opened to the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2013).

The Program carried an average of 925 active files over the course of 2012-2013. On March 31, 2013, there were 126 pending service requests or clients that had gone through the intake process but had not yet been contacted by a Workers' Adviser to discuss their case.

After the initial intake process is complete, files are assigned to Workers' Advisers by a team leader who reviews the files to ensure eligibility. The team leader considers geographic region, type of injury or illness, and caseloads when assigning files to Workers' Advisers. In 2012-2013 the Workers' Advisers each carried an average caseload of 69 active files.

Process

Service Waiting Time

	Local		Out-of-Town		
Intake Period 2012-13	**Halifax**	**Sydney**	**Bridgewater Yarmouth**	**Digby Kentville Amherst/Truro**	**New Glasgow Antigonish Port Hawkesbury**
April - June	7.4	7.3	7.7	7.8	7.8
July - September	6.7	4.4	7.2	5.8	4.9
October - December	5.7	4.8	7.6	6.5	5.6
January - March	5.0	3.8	5.8	6.4	5.9
Area Averages	6.2	5.1	7.1	6.6	6.1

Local Offices Average Waiting Period: 5.6 weeks

Out-of-Town Average Waiting Period: 6.6 weeks

Provincial Average Waiting Period: 6.2 weeks

The waiting period for service for all intake is calculated from the date the worker first contacts the Intake Clerk to the date of the worker's first appointment with a Workers' Adviser (in person or by telephone) to discuss the worker's appeal.

The Program monitor the waiting time for service on a monthly basis. Our goal is to respond to requests for service by meeting with the worker within 6 weeks of their initial request. The provincial average waiting period for 2012-13 was 6.2 weeks (includes local and out-of-town times).

Factors affecting service wait times include delays in obtaining access to the WCB claim files, both paper and electronic, and the Workers' Advisers' workload and travel to out-of-town appointments or hearings.

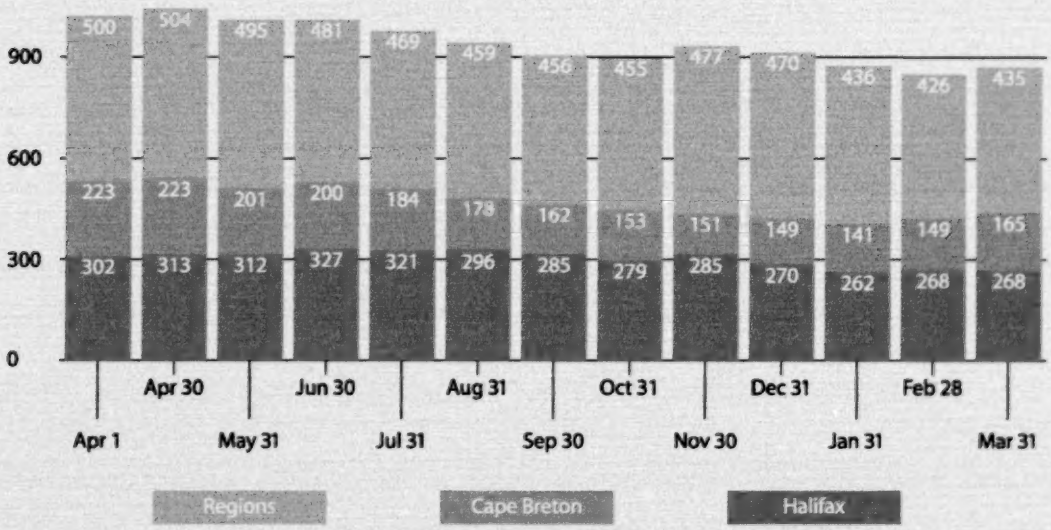
Client Count by County

On April 1, 2012, the Program had 1025 active files. On March 31, 2013, there were 868 active files, a 15.6 percent decrease over the course of the year with an average of **925** open files between April 1 and March 31.

County	Apr 1	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar 31
Annapolis	22	24	27	27	26	22	22	21	22	22	23	18	18
Antigonish	12	12	11	13	11	13	10	8	10	9	9	8	8
Cape Breton	219	223	201	200	184	178	162	153	151	149	141	149	165
Colchester	46	48	42	35	34	39	36	34	32	31	30	31	33
Cumberland	48	49	47	47	42	41	42	44	49	51	48	48	49
Digby	8	8	6	9	9	10	8	8	8	8	5	5	6
Guysborough	13	14	14	14	15	15	13	13	14	13	15	15	14
Halifax	302	313	312	327	321	296	285	279	285	270	262	268	268
Hants	50	47	48	45	46	49	46	45	41	39	39	40	37
Inverness	12	11	11	9	9	9	11	10	11	10	12	11	12
Kings	70	74	76	75	72	64	67	71	73	70	61	59	64
Lunenburg	90	91	86	82	86	82	86	80	90	87	76	72	69
Pictou	47	43	40	38	38	39	41	45	49	45	42	45	50
Queens	18	17	17	20	19	19	18	20	20	24	21	21	21
Richmond	12	12	13	12	11	11	12	13	13	11	10	9	9
Shelbourne	15	15	13	14	13	12	10	9	10	13	12	10	11
Victoria	8	7	7	7	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	7
Yarmouth	15	15	12	13	13	12	13	11	13	13	11	11	12
Other	18	17	23	21	19	16	14	16	15	17	15	15	15
TOTAL	**1025**	**1040**	**1008**	**1008**	**974**	**933**	**903**	**887**	**913**	**889**	**839**	**843**	**868**

A complete file audit was completed during this period which resulted in a number of files being closed. The Program's primary role is to help workers with their appeals and we usually do this on an issue-by-issue basis. When a worker contacts the Program for help, it is typically because of a particular issue relating to a claim. When this issue is resolved in the worker's favour or if the Workers' Adviser determines there is no reasonable expectation of success in an appeal, we will close the file for services.

Client Count by Area

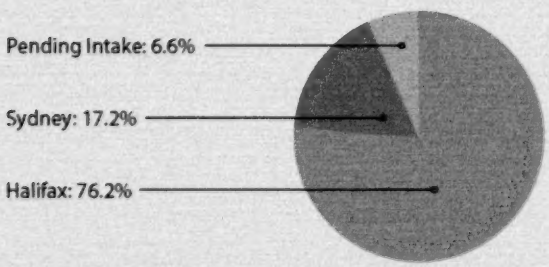


> The above chart graphically displays the proportion of clients living in Halifax, Cape Breton and Out of Town. The Out of Town figures represent all clients living outside metro Halifax or Cape Breton.

An average of 31.4 percent of the Program's clients live within the Halifax Regional Municipality; 18.4 percent live within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and 50.2 percent reside outside the CBRM or HRM areas.

> Files are distributed between the Halifax and Sydney offices. One of the Advisers serving the Sydney area is located in Halifax.

File Distribution



Representation

Workers' Advisers provide representation to injured workers and their families pursuing workers' compensation benefits and services. Workers' Advisers consult with workers and others regarding claims, attend meetings and hearings, and obtain evidence and present it to workers' compensation decision makers.

Workers' Advisers have access to research and other resources required to pursue appeals. They are familiar with issues and pressures affecting injured workers and strive to achieve an effective working relationship with them.

The Workers' Advisers Program does not represent injured workers as a special interest group or lobby government for changes in legislation. The Program does not pursue other matters outside of workers' compensation claims, such as Canada Pension benefits, Unemployment Insurance, or Social Assistance.

Workers' Advisers do not represent employers and they do not advise or represent governments or other agencies.

Program Statistics

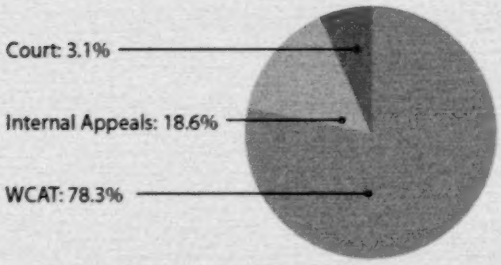
	Submissions/Hearings Done			New Appeals Filed		
	Court	Hearing Officer	WCAT	Court	Hearing Officer	WCAT
April	1	14	29	0	17	25
May	1	12	32	2	17	42
June	1	10	25	1	20	42
July	1	3	33	0	13	13
August	0	9	16	0	10	22
September	2	5	29	0	12	10
October	2	10	35	0	13	24
November	2	7	28	2	12	23
December	1	2	32	0	18	16
January	1	4	42	2	17	20
February	3	7	34	0	18	23
March	0	7	43	0	15	30
TOTAL	**15**	**90**	**378**	**7**	**182**	**290**

> The Program's resources are mainly focussed on appeals at the WCAT level.

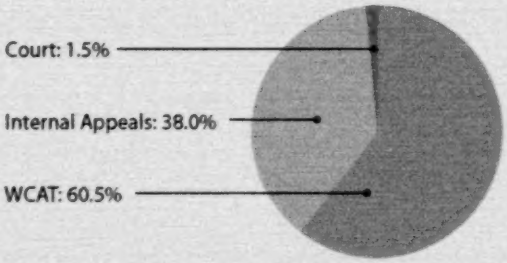
> Workers typically file their own appeals to the Hearing Officer before going through the Program's intake process.

> The Program filed 7 new appeals to the Court of Appeal during the year 2012/2013. An appeal to the Court of Appeal is limited because an appeal can only be made from an Appeals Tribunal decision on a question of law or jurisdiction pursuant to s.256 of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

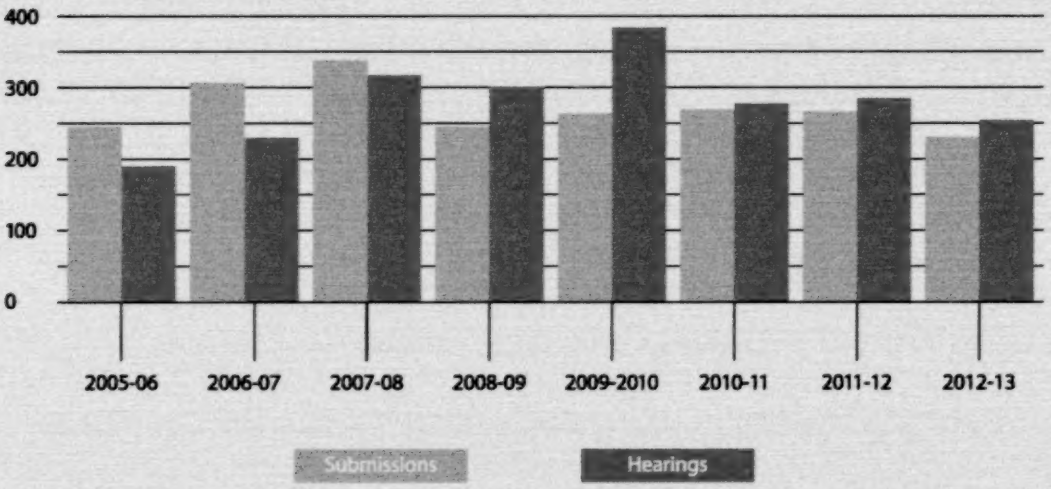
Hearings/Submissions



New Appeals Filed



of Hearings and Submissions



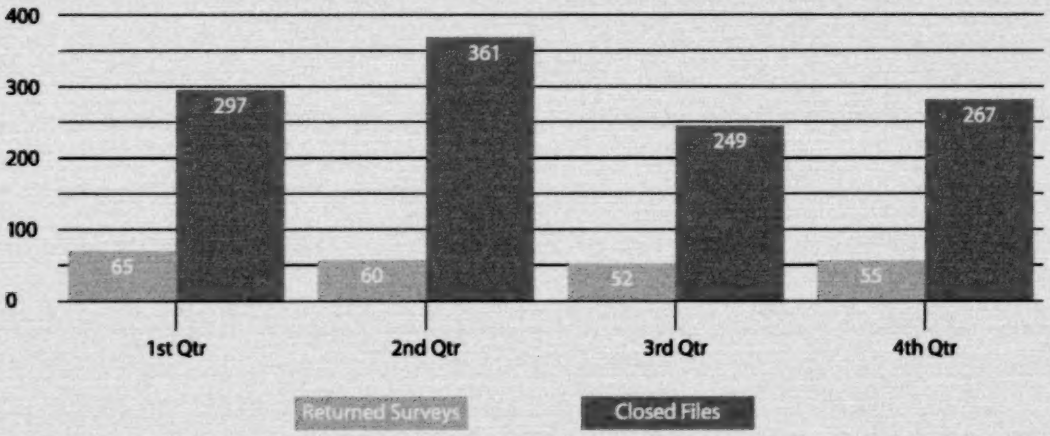
Client Satisfaction

Client Survey Results

The Program began mailing satisfaction surveys to clients with their closed files in April 2003. This practice will continue so that future results will allow us to track satisfaction trends and address service issues.

	Apr/May /Jun	Jul/Aug /Sep	Oct/Nov /Dec	Jan/Feb /Mar	Total	% Return for Year
Closed Files	297	361	249	267	1174	
Returned Surveys	65	60	52	55	232	19.8%
Providied Comments	38	47	37	39	161	69.4%
Not Positive Outcomes	12	14	13	22	61	26.3%
Negative Comments	3	5	8	4	20	8.6%
% Return for the Quarter	21.9%	16.6%	20.9%	20.6%		
Variance from Previous Quarter	2.8%	-5.3%	4.3%	-0.3%		

Although 26.3 percent of the clients returning surveys did not have a positive outcome with respect to their appeal (61 divided by 232 surveys returned), only 20 negative comments were received (8.6 percent). **Our satisfaction rate remains high.**



Based on the data obtained from the returned surveys, we can determine that 89.4% of our clients "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the service provided by the Program staff satisfied their requirements.

Specific results to our questions are as follows:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The program staff I dealt with were professional and friendly at all times.	*Apr/May/Jun*	82.6%	14.7%	0.0%	2.8%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	74.7%	16.9%	3.3%	3.4%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	73.2%	19.4%	2.1%	3.8%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	81.3%	15.9%	0.0%	2.8%
	% for year	**77.9%**	**16.7%**	**1.4%**	**3.2%**
2. In my experience, I felt the program staff had the knowledge and experience for dealing with my situation.	*Apr/May/Jun*	77.5%	15.5%	4.1%	2.8%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	76.2%	10.4%	7.0%	4.9%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	62.8%	25.5%	4.2%	5.9%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	76.8%	18.0%	1.2%	4.0%
	% for year	**73.3%**	**17.4%**	**4.1%**	**4.4%**
3. I felt the program staff did their very best to provide me with the best possible service.	*Apr/May/Jun*	79.8%	11.9%	2.5%	5.8%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	74.7%	11.8%	8.4%	3.4%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	62.1%	26.3%	2.1%	8.0%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	82.9%	11.9%	2.5%	4.0%
	% for year	**74.9%**	**15.5%**	**3.9%**	**5.3%**
		All the Time	**Most of the Time**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
4. My calls were returned within 24 hours.	*Apr/May/Jun*	61.2%	22.2%	8.3%	7.2%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	46.1%	33.1%	10.2%	3.6%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	43.5%	35.2%	17.5%	2.2%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	53.7%	36.6%	5.8%	4.0%
	% for year	**51.1%**	**31.8%**	**10.5%**	**4.3%**
5. My questions were answered to my satisfaction.	*Apr/May/Jun*	72.8%	17.2%	5.8%	4.4%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	71.8%	13.1%	8.4%	5.1%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	72.5%	15.9%	2.1%	8.0%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	80.5%	11.0%	3.3%	5.2%
	% for year	**74.4%**	**14.3%**	**4.9%**	**5.7%**
Satisfaction rating		**89.4%**		**9.5%**	

Committees and Associations

Canadian Association of Workers' Advisors and Advocates

The Canadian Association of Workers' Advisers and Advocates (CAWAA) is a national organization established to develop a professional system of sharing information and best practices across jurisdictions and explore emerging workers' compensation issues relevant to workers while respecting its members' distinct workers' compensation mandates.

The Chief Worker Adviser represents the Nova Scotia Workers' Advisers Program at this association and chairs its Research Committee. Additional information on this association is available on their website: http://cawaa.org/

Workplace Safety and Insurance System Advisory Councils and Working Groups

Nova Scotia's **Workplace Safety and Insurance System** (WSIS) includes workers, employers, the relevant statutory agencies (the WCB, WCAT, the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and the Workers' Advisers Program), and others who provide services in the system. Additional information is available on the WSIS website: http://www.wsis.ns.ca/index.php

The **Issues Resolution Working Group** and a sub-committee, the **Appeal Issues Discussion Group**, consist of representatives from the Workers' Advisers Program, the WCB, and WCAT. These committees meet regularly to discuss workers' compensation issues and advise system partners on ways to improve issues resolution in the workers' compensation system.

The **Heads of Agencies Committee** is comprised of the heads of the four statutory system agencies:

- Director of the Occupational Health and Safety Division;
- Chief Worker Adviser of the Workers' Advisers Program;
- Chief Appeal Commissioner of WCAT; and
- CEO of the WCB.

Members of the Heads of Agencies Committee are responsible for the ongoing delivery of service to workers and employees in the system and for measuring and reporting of outcomes and progress in alignment with system goals. They are also responsible for coordinating strategic plan implementation.

Other Committees and Associations

Workers' Advisers Program staff are involved in other committees and associations to enhance their contribution to the workers' compensation system, the Department, and community. They include:

- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Labour and Advanced Education Senior Management
- Nova Scotia Barristers' Society
- Canadian Bar Association
- Labour and Advanced Education Diversity Committee
- Labour and Advanced Education Web Committee.

Professional Development and Training

This year, as in the past, Program staff members took part in training programs to enhance their professional skills and personal development.

Starting in 2012 the Nova Scotia Barristers Society requires all lawyers to take 12 hours of continuing legal education per year. Workers' Advisers attended various courses put on by Canadian Bar Association, the Nova Scotia Barristers Society, and other training providers.

Throughout the year staff members attended various government mandatory and optional courses and training sessions.

The Workers' Advisers Program is committed to ensuring our people are provided with opportunities to acquire and improve their accreditations and skills.